

FROM THE BABYLON OF THE WEST

•overeign Pontiff." And the Pope : " I do not ask you for dvice, but to tell me the will of God in this matter/" And, fhile she still made excuses, he charged her on her obedience, o say if she knew anything of the will of God in this affair. ' Then she, humbly bowing down her head, said : * Who :noweth this better than your Holiness, who vowed to God that 'ou would do this thing ?' When he heard this, he was overwhelmed with amazement, for, as he said, no living man save himself knew that he had made this vow."¹

There were the usual petty persecutions and trials, for all he corrupt members of the papal court and their dependants ;vere naturally against her. Soon after her arrival, three pre-ates of the Curia came to Catherine, and made a prolonged ittempt to ensnare her in her speech, hoping apparently to discredit her growing influence with the Pope by convicting her of having come under false pretences as ambassador for Florence, or of heresy in the doctrines she professed. Foiled in their object, they candidly reported to the Pope that they had never found a soul so humble and so illumined ; but the attempt, especially with a view to an accusation of heresy, had been a serious one. " I can tell you," said the Pope's physician, Francesco Casini, to Stefano Maconi,^{tc} that, if they had not found this virgin Catherine had a solid foundation, she would never have made a more unfortunate voyage." ² This Francesco di Bartolommeo Casini, a Sienese by birth, who had been one of Petrarca's friends and correspondents, now attached himself to Catherine's circle; a man of great reputation in his own art and of considerable influence in the papal court, his friendship stood the whole fellowship in good stead. Another influential person who conceived a great affection and devotion for Catherine was the Pope's sister, the Countess of Valentinois, who expressed a desire to be present when she received Communion. Coming one Sunday morning, at Raimondo's

¹ *LegenJa*, II. iv. 7 (§152); *Processus*, col. 1325. Gregory during the conclave had made a vow that, if elected Pope, he would return to Rome. ^a *Efntola Domni Stephani*, §§ 22-24.